Request for Proposal (RFP) dated January 11, 2011,
for 511 Website Services,
Proposers' Questions & MTC's Answers

February 9, 2011

This document represents a compilation of questions received via email and/or at the January 20, 2011 Proposers' Conference. MTC's answers are included after each of the questions or groups of questions.

1. Q: Has MTC and/or the home page and sister site contractors conducted systematic website usability testing? Would there be a need for this under this contract?

    A: Yes, MTC and the 511 contractors have conducted focus groups and usability targeted testing over the years as new features, enhancements or design efforts have rolled out. 511 also conducts annual user satisfaction surveys. User satisfaction surveys are not part of the RFP's *Appendix A*, Preliminary Scope of Work. They are performed under a different 511 contract.

    Focus groups and usability studies tied to design efforts are included in this contract under *Appendix A*, Preliminary Scope of Work, Task II.B. Per Task II.B, the selected 511 Web Services Contractor will be tasked to conduct usability studies for design and development work implemented by the web services contractor as well as by other 511 contractors. Focus groups and usability studies will also be conducted under Proejct Element III.

2. Q: Would there be access to the website research data after being contracted?

    A: These findings are available now and posted on the MTC website at:
    http://www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs/contracts/511_web.htm.

3. Q: What technologies are required besides ASP?

    A: The 511.org home page is written in ASP and the backend is textual information. Tools on the 511.org home page receive data through API interfaces, databases supported by other 511 Contractors, and/or JavaScript. AJAX technologies, Windows.NET, ASPX, Java (J2EE), C# (.Net), C++, and JavaScript are used on the other 511 modal pages.

    Per Task II.A of *Appendix A*, Preliminary Scope of Work, the 511 Web Services Contractor will maintain just what is on the 511.org homepage during the first year of the contract. However, per Section II.A of the RFP and Program Element III of *Appendix A,* Preliminary Scope of Work, it is intended that the 511 Web Services Contractor will become responsible for all website pages therefore requiring knowledge of languages/technologies used throughout the website.

    RFP Section III.F, "Form of Proposal - Qualifications and References," asks proposers to describe their qualifications as they relate to the tasks required in the Preliminary Scope of Work. Task II.B.5 in the SOW requires the Contractor to "be proficient in the coding

languages necessary to work with the 511 sister web pages..." To the extent that proposers have qualifications that demonstrate the team's ability to work with different technologies, proposers should present them.

4. Q: Should proposers provide information on qualifications that will be needed to take on broader responsibilities as well as capabilities for technologies in use today?

    A: Yes. RFP Section III.F, "Form of Proposal - Qualifications and References," asks proposers to describe their qualifications as they relate to the tasks required in the Preliminary Scope of Work. Program Element III in the Preliminary Scope of Work includes broader responsibilities.

5. Q: Does MTC have a strategic plan or a master plan available?

    A: Yes. The most recent 511 Strategic Plan was written in 2006 and is posted on the MTC website at http://www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs/contracts/511_web.htm along with the other 511 Web Services procurement reference materials. It is useful for background but is dated. The update cycle is every five years, but MTC does not yet have the "2011 511 Strategic Plan" available for public viewing. Much of the strategic thinking about the website is included in the RFP. Section III.G, "Form of Proposal," asks proposers to "(d)iscuss your team's approach for providing strategic website direction and technical guidance to MTC based on analysis of usage statistics, 511 customer research data, and relevant industry trends and standards."

6. Q: Is MTC thinking about generating revenue from 511? Is there a goal for this contract?

    A: Revenue generation is not a task in this RFP. There is no revenue generation goal in this contract. Under Tasks II.A, II.B and Program Element III of the Preliminary Scope of Work, the Contractor could be required to incorporate a revenue generation strategy (developed by MTC or another 511 Contractor) into the 511 web design. Proposers are not precluded from proposing revenue generation strategies if they are part of their approach to conducting the Preliminary Scope of Work tasks.

    Other 511 traveler information providers have pursued revenue generation. LA 511 has explicitly built in salable space on its website. MTC 511 staff has looked at the value of carving out space on the website for paid advertising, and for now staff has concluded that it is essentially not cost effective.

7. Q: The RFP talks about hosting, and it seems like MTC is heading towards having the 511 Web Services Contractor host the system, but the RFP doesn't explicitly say this. Is MTC thinking about it? Is this the correct read on the contract?

    A: Yes, that is the correct read. Task III.D in *Appendix A,* Preliminary Scope of Work, is "Host the entire 511 website." Per Section II.A, MTC intends that over the course of the contract, the 511 Web Services Contractor responsibilities will grow so that 511 uses one contractor, instead of four, to design, develop, operate and maintain its website. Figure 2 shows how the 511 Web Services Contractor will be responsible for hosting over time.

8. Q: Would MTC be able to provide analytics about the current use of the site (e.g. page usage, band width)?

    A: Usage statistics from the 4th quarter of 2010 are posted on the RFP website at http://www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs/contracts/511_web.htm. Band width usage is as follows:
    - Home page – 201.04GB , subpages – 195.26GB
    - Whole 511 website: 511.org (396.27 GB)

9. Q: Do the analytics break down usage by where users are going on the site, also mobile vs. web? Especially as relates to scalability?

    A: The statistics package on the RFP website shows user sessions by website feature. The website statistics show historical data starting from 2004, thus showing usage spikes and growth over time. Mobile data is included in the statistics package on the website at http://www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs/contracts/511_web.htm, but data is available only for two full quarters since MTC launched 511 Mobile in April 2010.

10. Q: You mentioned that the homepage is clean and uncluttered; is there any strategic reason why it is black and white?

    A: MTC's executive office desires a muted palette and sufficient room to display 511 tools and features on the homepage. MTC's goal is to get users to those tools and features without overwhelming them with extraneous design.

    511 started rolling out its current design about two years ago. The current design has been rolled out on the 511.org homepage and rideshare pages; partially rolled out on the transit pages; and is in the process of rolling out on the traffic and bicycling pages.

11. Q: Is there a goal to bring different resources and systems of traffic video to the 511 website, or is this not really part of the RFP?

    A: MTC has a desire to have live video on 511, but adding video is not part of *Appendix A,* Preliminary Scope of Work.

12. Q: It sounds like MTC has done a lot of market research already. Is MTC happy with the usage of 511.org? Is MTC looking for more people to use it? Does MTC feel that the usage has peaked? Any thoughts about it?

    A: MTC is always looking for more 511 users. MTC cannot justify the continued existence of 511 if there is a dramatic decline in usage. Even though we are aware of an increasing number of traveler information providers, 511 is not seeing a decline in website usage, other than cyclical trends or declines after emergency event usage spikes.

13. Q: Hosting is not part of this RFP, but hosting would be in the phase 3/task 3 future capabilities category, so MTC may or may not ask the 511 Web Services Contractor to do the hosting, so we are not bidding specifically on hosting at this time, correct?

A: Hosting is part of this RFP under *Appendix A*, <u>Preliminary Scope of Work</u>, Task III.D. Hosting, therefore, is not a contractor responsibility at the beginning of the contract period. From the beginning of the contract period, however, the Contractor may be asked to provide technical guidance and strategy about hosting per Task II.A.4.

RFP Section III.G ("Form of Proposal – Work Plan") instructs bidders to "(p)rovide a detailed work plan explaining how the Contractor will conduct each task identified in *Appendix A*, <u>Preliminary Scope of Work</u> during the contract period, August 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016." Because Program Element III is part of the <u>Preliminary Scope of Work</u>, bidders should discuss their approach to hosting.

RFP Section III.H ("Form of Proposal – Cost Proposal") instructs bidders not to include Program Element III work in their cost proposals.

14. Q: With regard to emergency response and the impact on traffic flows, if we were to have another Loma Prieta earthquake, and we are talking about months if not years of altered traffic patterns, there has to be some limit to what that emergency response would be under this proposal. Is that a valid assumption? Especially if need shifts from 8 hours a day / 5 days a week to 24x7.

A: One of the important, ongoing justifications for the 511 program is its emergency response role. In emergencies, 511's response occurs in two phases. The initial response requires 24X7 staffing and might last a few days or a few weeks. In the second phase, emergency information is maintained in a more steady-state. It is impossible to predict how emergency response will play out, but within the second phase, there could be times when 24X7 response is required again. For example, a section of infrastructure has been repaired a few months after the earthquake and traffic patterns are again shifting.

Per *Appendix A*, <u>Preliminary Scope of Work</u>, Task II.C.1 MTC is relying on this contractor to be available to MTC in emergencies.

RFP Section III.H asks proposers to set aside $10,000 for emergency response. This would cover a short-term emergency such as the events 511 has responded to in the past years (e.g., MacArthur Maze collapse and Bay Bridge incidents). MTC does not expect contractors to work without being paid.

15. Q: How does MTC get the data into the system? Is there any room for improvement? How does MTC push the data into your database?

A: The data sources vary depending on mode. The method of transfer also varies. There is always room for improvement. However, data collection is not part of the scope of this contract at any point in time.

16. Q: Is there any forecasting tool for predictions?

A: No, 511 data is not future-predicted. 511 has a feature on the traffic site that provides future driving times based on historical data (Predict-a-Trip). However, data collection is not part of the scope of this contract at any point in time.

17. Q: How would you characterize the technical skills of the MTC staff?

A: Within the people at MTC that work to deliver 511, there is a wide range of technical expertise and experience. As a general rule MTC looks for the hard-core technical expertise to come from our contractors.

18. Q: With the 5% DBE, you mention that if you can show that you made a Good Faith Effort (GFE) but weren't able to meet the 5% goal your bid will not be thrown out. Is that correct?

A: That is correct. MTC believes that everyone should be able to meet the 5% goal. Being in the Bay Area, and considering the type of work that is proposed, there are enough ready, willing and able UDBE firms in that category to meet the 5% goal. But if a proposer documents on Appendix F-5 their outreach efforts to UDBE firms and shows that it made a GFE, the proposer would be found to have made a GFE and found responsive, even if it did not meet the 5% goal.

19. Q: Would it be made public if an exception to the DBE requirement was made?

A: MTC will not grant an exception to the DBE requirement. Either a proposer meets the 5% goal or shows that it made a Good Faith Effort (GFE) to meet the goal. If the UDBE goal is not met and the Proposer fails to show a GFE, the proposal will be considered non-responsive. The decision about whether a proposer made a GFE is at the discretion of MTC, and is based on what a reasonable person would find to be a GFE. For example, documentation that two emails were sent would not be sufficient, but a spreadsheet cataloguing 200 outreach attempts and results from the outreach effort would most likely be sufficient. As a public entity, everything MTC does is a matter of public record, and the winning proposal will become open to the public, including the documentation related to the GFE if that is what the proposer did.

20. Q: Regarding the cost-effectiveness criteria, does MTC have a benchmark it is trying to meet? Or is it cost-effectiveness relative to the other respondents?

A: No, there is no benchmark or formula for determining cost-effectiveness.

21. Q: The diagrams included in the RFP indicate that the goal is to take tool development out of the contracts in which they currently reside. How does MTC foresee that happening? What is the mechanism by which those get moved? What kind of transition periods are you talking about? How would we expect this to come down the pike?

A: The other contracts are written such that MTC has the option to remove select tasks from the other contracts prior to the expiration of those contracts. For example the sample task in this RFP is currently in the Traffic contract, but it is something that could be easily moved from that contract to this. MTC will work with all its 511 contractors to plot these transitions.

22. Q: As highly integrated systems what type of mechanism does MTC imagine putting in place that would, for example, separate the traffic map on the website from the traffic tools that feed the phone system? How does that web tool become something that can migrate away from the contract that is managing the data and the database currently?

   A: It is MTC's vision that one day the 511 Web Services Contractor could take on the responsibility of managing and developing all of the web tools. If and when 511 gets to that point, the backend system will also have to be prepared to allow that. The backend system would then not be so coupled with each separate web page, which is currently the case. The backend system will need to be de-coupled to allow the web services contractor to develop the tools.

23. Q: If partners will be able to tap into the backend, is authorization and authentication important? Or is it just going to be publicly available?

   A: Authorization and authentication will be important.

24. Q: For Task 2.B, variable web services, the Proposers are supposed to set aside existing budget (from the $1.3M total budget), correct? The RFP states that this may get additional budget, but the set aside still occurs out of the overall budget. Just want to make sure.

   A: Yes. Section II.C and III.H.2 of the RFP explain MTC's expectations regarding this set-aside. MTC assumes that Proposers will not require the entire $1.3M budget to perform Tasks I.A – I.C (project management), Task II.A (operations and maintenance), and Task II.C (respond to emergencies/incidents), therefore leaving a "reserve" for Task II.B (variable web services).

25. Q: How will the relative size of this set aside factor in to the proposal evaluation?

   A: To an extent, the larger the set-aside, the more cost effective the cost proposal for the Variable Web Services tasks. However, MTC must be convinced by the Proposer that the cost proposal is reasonable and that the MTC will receive the service it requires for the other tasks.

26. Q: All Task 3 activities will occur outside this $1.3M budget, correct?

   A: Correct. Section II.C of the RFP states, "If any tasks in the New Project Responsibilities program element are amended into the 511 Web Services Contract, the budget available will increase accordingly." Section III.H instructs proposers not to include Program Element III in the cost proposals.

27. Q: What does MTC define as "availability" in the emergency services section (II.3, page 34), when you say "two project coordinators and two web developers are available in a 24 hour period?" Does this mean on site? Does MTC have a response time in mind, in terms of when MTC picks up the phone, how soon you should get a call back?

A: By available, MTC means that two individuals are at the ready to staff initial emergency response over a 24 hour period, so that one person is not required to work continuously without relief. MTC's experience has found that contractors can be initially responsive and available, but that their bench is not deep enough to sustain the effort after the first twelve or so hours. Often, 511 requires 24-hour coverage in the early hours of an emergency response effort, even if it is on an "on-call" basis. Availability does not have to be on site. Working from home or another remote location is feasible. MTC staff would expect a phone call, email or text response within 10 minutes of a request for emergency assistance. Sometimes the Contractor will independently become aware that an incident has occurred and will realize that an immediate response is required. Also, MTC staff will call, text, email and make repeated attempts to get an immediate response from the Contractor staff, so MTC will make efforts to make the urgency of a response obvious.

28. Q: Our developers work primarily in Windows.NET and SQL server for dynamic web application programming. Is MTC open to that technology platform for ongoing development projects?

    A. To date, the 511 contractors have used different technologies to develop the 511 website. 511.org is written in ASP, while the other pages use Windows.NET ASPX, Java (J2EE), C# (.Net), C++, and JavaScript and Oracle and Microsoft SQL Server databases. MTC would not want to invest in a major recoding effort, however MTC is open to hearing different approaches to streamline future web development, operations and maintenance. Proposers should present their technology qualifications per Section III.F "Form of Proposal – Qualifications and References," which ask proposers to "(d)escribe your familiarity and experience working with various website development architecture, technologies, and platforms. Include specific examples of technologies, programming languages, etc."

29. What is the technology of your current hosting platform?

    A. 511.org is currently hosted by the 511 Traffic Contractor at a hosting facility in San Diego. The www.511.org portal site is coded primarily in XHTML with some ASP (VBScript) functions, and is hosted on a Windows Server 2003 and IIS 6.0 environment that includes a staging site running Adobe Contribute Server, from which page content is replicated every 10 minutes to a pair of load-balancers. 511 also uses ESRI ArcGIS for GIS, and mdv proprietary platform for the transit trip planner and the multi-modal trip planner.

30. Q: We are based in Santa Monica, though we work all over the country. Do you have a local bay-area preference for the selected Contractor?

    A: The RFP has no requirement that the team be located in the Bay Area. Several tasks in the Preliminary Scope of Work (e.g., I.B.2, I.B.3, II.A.8, II.A.13, II.A.15, II.B.1, II.B.4 and II.C) require meetings and/or coordination with MTC, MTC partners and/or other 511 contractors. Per RFP Section III.G, proposers should address their approach to these (and other) tasks. Per RFP Section III.H, the cost proposal must include all direct costs, such as travel.

31. I am trying to understand if we can get this job done remotely from a team based either in Florida or India or it needs to be done onsite.

    A: See the response to Q30.

32. Q: How many hours per month are currently spent on routine maintenance on the site?

    A: MTC estimates that the current contractor spends 25 to 30 hours per month on front-end web maintenance and update tasks that fall within the web operations and maintenance task (Task II.A). The range is as low as 20 hours and as high as 40 hours.

33. Q: For paragraph A.2.a., page 8, Scope of Work, should the bidder include pricing on updating requested Web contents via the current Adobe Contribute authoring tool and pricing on content updates to an updated Web Portal/511.org? At least for the first year?

    A. Only MTC staff use Contribute to update 511.org. The current contractor uses Dreamweaver. Proposers should include pricing for the content update work described in Task II.A in the RFP's Preliminary Scope of Work.

34. Q: On page 32, Variable Web Services, item 4, can Proposers assume that future contents of 511.org are contributed from various approved departments and corresponding publishing workflow / notification features are built-in to the updated Web Portal/511.org?

    A: MTC provides direction for the content of 511.org. Some content is automatically updated (e.g., real-time data). The current contractor updates 511.org using Dreamweaver. MTC staff update 511.org (when necessary (e.g., during an emergency response effort) using Adobe Contribute. 511.org does not have publishing notification features to inform Contractor staff or MTC staff when 511.org has been updated. During an emergency response effort, however, when multiple MTC staff may be using Contribute, each editor is notified if the page is currently being edited by other users, and changes would not be allowed at the same time. However, no global notification would occur letting everyone know that an update had been made.

35. Q: On page 10, paragraph A.2.c, Emergency Incident Response, should Proposers include pricing on out-of-area hosting and messaging facilities for providing almost real-time information?

    A: No. Hosting is currently provided under a different 511 contract. If hosting falls under this contract in future years (per Program Element III), the hosting scope of work and budget will be written through a contract amendment. The real-time data that is needed for the system is also generated by the other 511 contractors and is not part of this contract.

36. Q: Page 33: Develop multilingual text: How many different languages should be supported? Does it mean that entire 511.org will be made multilingual? If not – which parts will need to be maintained in multiple languages?

A: 511 currently supports Spanish and Mandarin on 511.org. MTC is currently developing a strategy for providing content in multiple languages on the 511.org website. The 511 Web Services Contractor would be expected to implement this strategy on 511.org, as requested. The strategy may involve automatic translation tools or permanent translation of key text. MTC may also look to the 511 Web Services Contractor to recommend alternative strategies. For the out-years of the contract, Proposers should assume that they will support two to three languages. Depending upon the strategy chosen, the addition of a third language could be implemented through Task II.A (operations and maintenance) or Task II.B (variable web services). The ongoing maintenance of languages following implementation would be supported under Task II.A (operations and maintenance).

37. Q: Page 36, Sample task: Should the cost of focus groups, usability studies and design work be part of the proposed budget?

    A: Yes.

38. Q: Does the RFP Scope of Work include creating content for web pages as well as updating content?

    A: Yes.

39. Q: Are the insurance requirements at all negotiable--for example, can the required coverage amounts be reduced?

    A: In general, substantive insurance requirements are not negotiable after award. Proposers must submit requests for exception or modification no later than 2/14/11.